

Short Fiction

J.P. Haggard

Mike L. Mallory

Beth Stevenson

Essay

Martha Vaught

Poetry

John L. Ford

Kenneth James

Mike L. Mallory

Kenneth J. Paylor

Dorothy Speck

Photography

Mark Ancell

Nick Coble

Book Review

Mark R. Mulik

Vol. IV, No. IV

Thursday, March 2, 1989

A supplement of The Chart
Missouri Southern State College
Joplin, Mo. 64801-1595

AVALON

is

Missouri Southern's
Monthly Art and
Literary Magazine

A Missouri College
Newspaper Association
Awarding-Winning
Publication

Editor

Mark R. Mulik

Assistant Editor

John L. Ford

Editorial Assistants

Mike L. Mallory

Christopher Andrew Clark
John Morris

Adviser

Chad D. Stebbins

Avalon, as a supplement of *The Chart*, is published by Missouri Southern State College's communications department. It serves as a laboratory experience to its staff and a forum for writers, artists, and photographers at Missouri Southern.

Persons wanting to submit material (artwork, photographs, short stories, essays, and poetry) may do so by dropping it by *The Chart* office, Room 117, Heames Hall.

Avalon will only publish submissions from students, faculty members, or staff members at Missouri Southern.

Artwork and photographs submitted must be ready for publication. Size alterations may be made on such pieces in order to make the material fit within *Avalon's* pages. Literary material submitted must be in a legible format (typewritten is preferred).

Error-ridden literature submissions may be returned to the author for correction prior to publication. *Avalon* makes it its policy to correct typographical and grammatical errors within literature submissions.

Avalon accepts monetary contributions.

Avalon claims one-time publication rights to work appearing in its pages.

Volume IV, Number IV
March 2, 1989

COVER
ART

BY
JOHN MORRIS

BABYLON

I took a lot of time thinking about this column. I first thought I would treat this as a grumpy, farewell column, as this is probably going to be the last issue of *Avalon* ever. But I changed my mind, deciding to write something light and silly, instead of the same, old, grumpy hogwash. I hope you like this change of attitude.

I was looking over a map of the state of Missouri the other day and discovered there was a town called Avalon in the north central part of the state. Really. It's near Chillicothe, and, supposedly, 100 people live there.

You see, I was looking over the map trying to find names of towns and cities that have meanings as non-proper nouns, such as Briar, Freedom, and Reform.

After recovering from the astonishment of finding a town called Avalon, I began to sort through the names of these other towns so as to do the ridiculous thing of making a sentence that made sense out of the names of Missouri towns. This is what I came up with: **The Bland, Black Jack Brewer Marched on the Arab Charity Tightwad and Fostered Regal Defiance of Fair Play.** (All of the words in bold are names of towns.)

I guess I should have expected to come up with such a silly sentence.

Just wondering—do you brew black jack? For that matter, black jack is a slang term for a some kind of hard liquor, isn't it?

Oh, well. As this is the last issue, I can't hardly expect anyone to send in a letter to the editor answering those questions.

You've noticed the ad on the back page. You probably got black all over your hands for just touching it. Sorry

about that, but it seemed like it would be attractive to design an page with black space.

OK. Maybe you haven't seen it. Look at the back page. Did you read it? No? Well, read it, then.

OK. Now that you've read it, I don't have to waste space in this column by telling you all of that.

I can add a few things to that, though.

I never wanted this to be the last issue *Avalon*. I enjoy the time I spend designing each issue. It's been a lot of fun being a "designer" for the short time I have been allowed to do this. This is the ninth issue I've worked on (four issues this year, as editor, and five issues last year, as co-editor). This is the 17th issue of the publication in its four years of existence.

I am quite thankful for the opportunity I was given to be the editor of this publication. Truly, I can say this was my publication, as I compiled it, designed it, and pasted up the majority of it. With *Avalon*, referred to as "that damn *Avalon*" by most *Chart* staffers, I was able to experiment and use my talents. With *Avalon*, I felt "at home," so to speak.

But remember, *Avalon* was your publication, too. It was the non-selective art and literary magazine that would accept whatever you wanted printed, with a handful of exceptions (e.i. a short story filled with obscenities was one exception).

If readers and contributors are good enough to open up their pockets (after they've paid their taxes) and supply *Avalon* with some money, this won't be the last issue. If I get \$220 in donations, you'll be seeing another issue.

So, if you want to see another issue of *Avalon*, do something about it: send money.

Mark R. Mulik

BOOK REVIEW

BY MARK R. MULIK
EDITOR

Forging the Darksword (Bantam Spectra, January, 1988), 391 pages, in paperback, \$3.95, by Margaret Weis and Tracy Hickman.

This first novel in the *Darksword Trilogy*, *Forging the Darksword* is a only a fair attempt by the co-authors who did the bestselling *Dragonlance* series.

Those who have read the six novels of the *Dragonlance Chronicles* and *Legends* will undoubtedly be expecting the *Darksword Trilogy* to be the type of fantasy saga that *Dragonlance* gave the reader.

Not so. At least, not yet. Currently in the middle of reading the second book of the trilogy, *Doom of the Darksword*, I don't detect this series as really being as powerful as *Dragonlance*.

The first *Darksword* novel presents a world where magic abounds. Every human is endowed in some way with magic, from lowly field workers to royalty.

And when one person is born without magic, or without the Life, as they call it, that person is called Dead. One of the main characters of the book is Dead.

At the start of this novel, two things happen which stir the reader's interest: a prologue describes that the people of the world of Thimhallan (the world, in the trilogy)

originally came from a world which must have been Earth, and a chapter immediately after the prologue describes a prophecy stating, "There will be born to the Royal House one who is dead yet will live, who will die again and live again. And when he returns, he will hold in his hand the destruction of the world." Both of these things are very interesting, especially the prophecy, as the reader wonders if it pertains to the main character who is Dead.

In another early chapter of the book, a son is born to the Royal House who is Dead, leading one to think the prophecy is to be fulfilled early on in the series.

It seems good that the authors have tried to start out a series by laying some groundwork for the reader at the beginning, telling the reader the possibilities of where the story might be going. In the *Dragons of Autumn Twilight*, the first of the *Dragonlance* novels, they started off by carefully introducing most of the major characters and saved describing anything of the plot until much later in that book.

Once again comparing this work to the co-authors' previous works, *Forging the Darksword* was not as good as any of the *Dragonlance* novels.

This one just doesn't have the spice of *Dragonlance*. There's a lot less plot and less intrigue in the story.

As I normally read a series to its end, I hope the next two books in the trilogy pick up a little, or I'll just be reading to kill time, instead of reading to enjoy myself.

The second and third books of the *Darksword Trilogy*, *Doom of the Darksword* and *Triumph of the Darksword*, were published are available.

Weis and Hickman are working on another trilogy, *The Rose of the Prophet*, the first book of which is currently available.



THE OTHER SIDE OF TRANSMISSION

—SHORT FICTION BY MIKE L. MALLORY

Jimmy is a Slug. In fact, he is the leader of the Slugs. The Slugs are of a band of rebels destined to become more than a mere footnote in *The Book of Dreams*. Dreams surmount; keeping track of dreams is a task delegated to Tessa Mink, the thinker.

Jimmy is an active citizen producing the goods required to sustain *The City of Dreams*. *The City of Dreams* is of mythical proportions. Those unaware of the city's existence would, perhaps, upon learning of such a place, not enter—for fear of finding something new, something formidable and real.

The possibility for "the other side of transmission" had become available as early as 1922 when a young man named Farnsworth astounded his high school teacher with a diagram for an electronic television system.

As his forefather in invention, Farnsworth, had done in 1922, Jimmy had done in 1981. He had amazed his teacher with a diagram for a (somewhat unique) television system.

Jimmy's scheme outlined the "impossible," according to his electronics instructor. "With today's technology a workable device such as the one you propose is unfeasible," Mr. Deacon told Jimmy. "Maybe in twenty years the technology will exist which will make your invention possible."

Jimmy, however, had no desire to wait two decades for the possibility that the technology his device required would be developed. He set out on his own attending various institutions of higher learning to witness the engineering aspects of electrical design. Being a master technician, Jimmy had the technical know-how. All he really needed was for the right opportunity to come along. As Jimmy likes to say, "It's not who knows you, but who you know knows you."

Few people really knew Jimmy then, nobody knew his real name. When after avoiding all attempts at positive identification of himself by the "establishment," Jimmy was informed he had to give his real name to be put on his college diploma, which he considered an artifact; an icon for his family to cherish. He hesitated for the briefest of moments. He then signed...Jimmy Jazz.

The great mind melt of '91 had taken its toll on modern music misfits. All film and video recording and playback machines were outlawed and destroyed. No longer could pre-recorded messages be transmitted or even viewed in private.

An actor, musician, or public official's image could no longer be maintained by virtue of pre-fabricated, videotaped performances. A performer's true character was tested and

often was revealed by the live camera's eye.

The prohibition of pre-recorded video was The President's Men's effort to put a halt to rock music video's and pornography's influences on the future of the country's youth.

The art of silence had been discovered as futile attempts were made at filling the unoutlawed broadcaster's and cable operator's airtime with useful information and creative conversation. One could then watch a live shot of the sunrise on network television with nature providing the sound track.

Live extravaganzas had made a comeback. The atmosphere surrounding the industry was as it had been when television was first invented. The face of TV changed with the introduction of high-definition television. When compared to conventional sets, the HDTV viewing experience was more like watching a reduced-size movie screen.

In exchange for the government's acquisition of the outlawed videotape machines, the then-outmoded receivers were replaced with new, HDTV monitors by the President's video czar.

TV networks consolidated to both reduce the cost of changing the stations' broadcast equipment to HDTV standards and to allow for expansion in the frequency spectrum needed for improved quality transmissions.

Being a master technician, Jimmy had the technical know-how. All he really needed was for the right opportunity to come along.

Tessa Mink had volunteered to be a rhesus monkey for Jimmy Jazz's latest knowledge enhancement experiment. After digesting a German language thought pill, she began to order a ground station-to-satellite link-up to enable her to view her favorite German band (Zion Narrows) performing in Berlin.

Such global transmissions, as well as domestic programs, were monitored by the TVI (Transgressive Video Investigators) for non-compliance with the World-Pac agreement on decency in programming.

As Tessa Mink registered her selection with the satellite receive station, she began speaking in German to the telecommunications operator. Undaunted by the successful knowledge transfer, Tessa Mink watched her monitor as Zion Narrows appeared before a standing-room-only crowd.

During his high-school electronics class, Jimmy Jazz first learned of HDTV's inevitable introduction. He knew when the technology was developed and introduced to the public, he would be prepared to implement his plans

for "the other side of transmission."

Tessa Mink's latest entry into *The Book of Dreams* found her transferring the words of Jimmy Jazz into the note-chip (a computer chip that produces musical notes from verbal instruction, which are transferred to hard copy). The translation from verbal expression to musical ideas is but one of the applications of Jimmy Jazz's personal transmission capabilities.

J.J. (as Jimmy Jazz's associates refer to him) had been recruited as a member of the Government's secret brain trust. He did not welcome the attention or the expectations put on him by people who knew the answers but were afraid to ask the questions. No one had ever been inside J.J.'s mind before, so he did not know what he should hide.

The Slugs welcomed every opportunity to perform for the media. Every performer on a broadcast outlet required prior approval from the TVI. Performances were monitored by censors who could cut off any performance deemed unfit under the World-Pac's guidelines.

Personal exposure was not the Slugs' desire, but a chance to test Jimmy Jazz's transmission theories and a chance to familiarize themselves with the broadcast equipment was.

In 1994, Society's Losers Under Government Scrutiny (the Slugs) were the first to acquire the technology required to invade the lives of an unsuspecting television viewing

public.

Because he foresaw a society with no personal freedom of movement, J.J. decided to keep the technology required for "the other side of transmission" to himself. However, it was only a matter of time before the TVI replicated Jimmy's invention.

J.J. recognized the dangers of "the other side of transmission." If the technology were in the hands of the Government he would not be able to escape the TV eye himself.

J.J. had often seen the off-network sequences of newscasts that were transmitted over the satellite and paid little attention to them. But today, when the newscast began in *The City of Dreams*, the newscaster said something that caught Jimmy Jazz's attention. Before turning to face the camera the newscaster had said Jimmy Jazz's name.

Jimmy Jazz was sure as he looked at the screen that not only was he watching television, but the TV was watching him, from "the other side of transmission"

Tessa Mink, the thinker, went back to sleep and awoke from a dream.

Ossabaw Island, Georgia

In early March we journeyed to a tropic, golden isle,
A wilderness of woods, called maritime, and sandy dune
Where strong sea winds caressed the shore—

An everchanging ring of beach whose surface bore
The endless waves of tide which cut anew each mile
Of its perimeter in heat of sun and light of moon.

What wondrous sights! Creatures bedecked with fur, or scales, or shelled,
Green growing things, and gray—to see them all become our quest.
Rough palm fronds clattered in the breeze

As white-tailed deer peered out between dark-shadowed trees,
Their branches veiled with Spanish moss, our eyes beheld
This beauty. Day and night we roamed—for loath we were to rest

Between each arm of scalloped shore the tidal marsh crept in.
Black waters flowed through cordgrass clumps where silent ibis stood—
Far off, the distant sound of the sea.

Ebb tide brought fiddler crabs who danced in harmony
Their graceful minuet, while eyes and toothy grin
Of 'gator watched from yonder bank, beside a log of wood.

We won't forget the silver dawn, the sunrise on the beach
The cries of seagulls as they wheeled and soared above the foam
The marsh where salty glassworts grow,

The furry, feral swine, the ferns, the starry glow
Reflected on the midnight sea so wide. Then, each
Of us did love the more "this fragile earth, our island home."*

* Guilbert, Charles Mortimer, Custodian, Eucharistic Prayer C,
The Book of Common Prayer, The Seabury Press, 1977.

Dorothy Speck

Just A Game

Listening to the crowds screaming out a name
My friends and I were just playing a game
We worked it all up one night over a few beers
We'd play at battle, with swords and spears
These would be fake it was just for fun
Then we'd sit around laugh when the day was done
Well we got started, and it was great
We just got carried away, and it was too late
They just kept beating him, he couldn't stand the strain
I guess, one day something popped in his brain
He was good at hiding it, he let no one know
He said, "Our mastery is good, to real weapons let's go"
Well we all argued this thought, that was said
Though we all knew it was what we wanted in our heads
And besides who, amongst us, would dare to harbor fear
So we set about the crafting of real swords and spears
In sparring we were careful wanting no one in pain
We just didn't realize, that he had a warped brain
Then one day it happened we were sparring in the field
Who would of dreamed someone could get killed
They figured it out, of course, by the glint in his eye
All they could say is we're your friends. Why?
Then a battle ensued like nothing before
The men all destroyed except one who slipped out the door
To be the victor of a friendly game
Now I'm sitting at the gallows as the crowd calls my name

Kenneth James

Talking To The Telephones

Changing suits in a booth with connections
Into a wired wardrobe
Found the flat
Found the tone to be alone

And wound up
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES

They never even say hello
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES
With elephants feeding into the memory
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES

Frozen long distance callers by the dozen
Left on hold for the talking season
Close calls and tall operators

Small installers
Inspectors with inventions
Collectors with extentions

Local zone dial-a-codes
Discussing private construction

And when they're done
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES
With elephants feeding into the memory
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES

Patterned for protection
From the daily demonstration
When you rehearse the conversation
You never remember
When you record the transaction
It gets lost by the translator

When you compare the composition
It's beyond explanation
So you wind up
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES
They never even say hello
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES
With elephants feeding into the memory
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES
TALKING TO THE TELEPHONES

Mike L. Mallory

THE TRUTH OF THE YOUTH

No signs of struggle
in this danger obsessed diversion
Hypnotic suggestion
put her in deep submission

And the clock is running low
on the time it wants to show
to the blind who have full use of their eyes
inside hiding from the tide

Blowing the fuse that is used to confuse
The ones who thought they knew the truth
THE TRUTH OF THE YOUTH
THE TRUTH OF THE YOUTH

The ancient ones in the sun
have the power to overcome
the inconsistencies
in the young one's imagination

The newborn breed in the land of need
have a desire to be free
To say what they feel to be real
possessing ambition to succeed

They desire THE TRUTH OF THE YOUTH
Feel the power THE TRUTH OF THE YOUTH

The truth will set you free
The youth is destiny
The truth is freedom
The news is a lie

No signs of struggle
In this feature-length daydream
Video obsession left her
in oblivion

And the digital clock is dying
Batteries are supplying power to the hour
But the minutes require something more
The newborn breed's imagination

Mike L. Mallory

Untitled

Oh mother of sadness
Looking for her young
Tearing with sharp claws at the blackness
Stumbling, on a half-forgotten path
Desperately seeking what was lost
Hoping, ever hoping it was only mislaid
Crying out, with bitter tears, No—
They're still craving my maternity
Sobbing
She clasped a bone to her breast in remembrance

Kenneth J. Paylor

Protester

"Can world peace ever be achieved?
Not within my lifetime,"
said the nice, young man
in a stark-white jacket
with the arms in back.

"I was once a dreamer.
As a teenager, I strove for peace,"
said the nice, young man
in a stark-white jacket
with the arms in back.

"I protested war, hate, violence,
and their friends fear, prejudice, and despair,"
said the nice, young man
in a stark-white jacket
with the arms in back.

"Those whom I wished to help
turned against me.
They called me radical, liberal,
a bleeding heart, insane and inane.
Numerous things, numerous names."

The nice, young man
in a stark-white jacket
with the arms in back
danced within the confines
of his rubber room.

John L. Ford

Back to School

it's the first day of the semester and I'm back in school again
really it's kind of strange because I don't know where all I've been
I got my paper my books and am ready to learn
but as I sit in class I just have to squirm
the teacher's kind of boring the class is not so great
it's not my fault I was 30 minutes late
what do they expect for me to pay attention too
I thought showing up was all I had to do
so now I sit here with my pencil or pen
listening to the teacher lecture again
Oh wow that girl bent over to pick up her book
the split in her skirt gave me quite a look
maybe this school stuff isn't too boring after all
I might even come back and enroll next fall

Kenneth James



Nick Coble

THE GALLERY

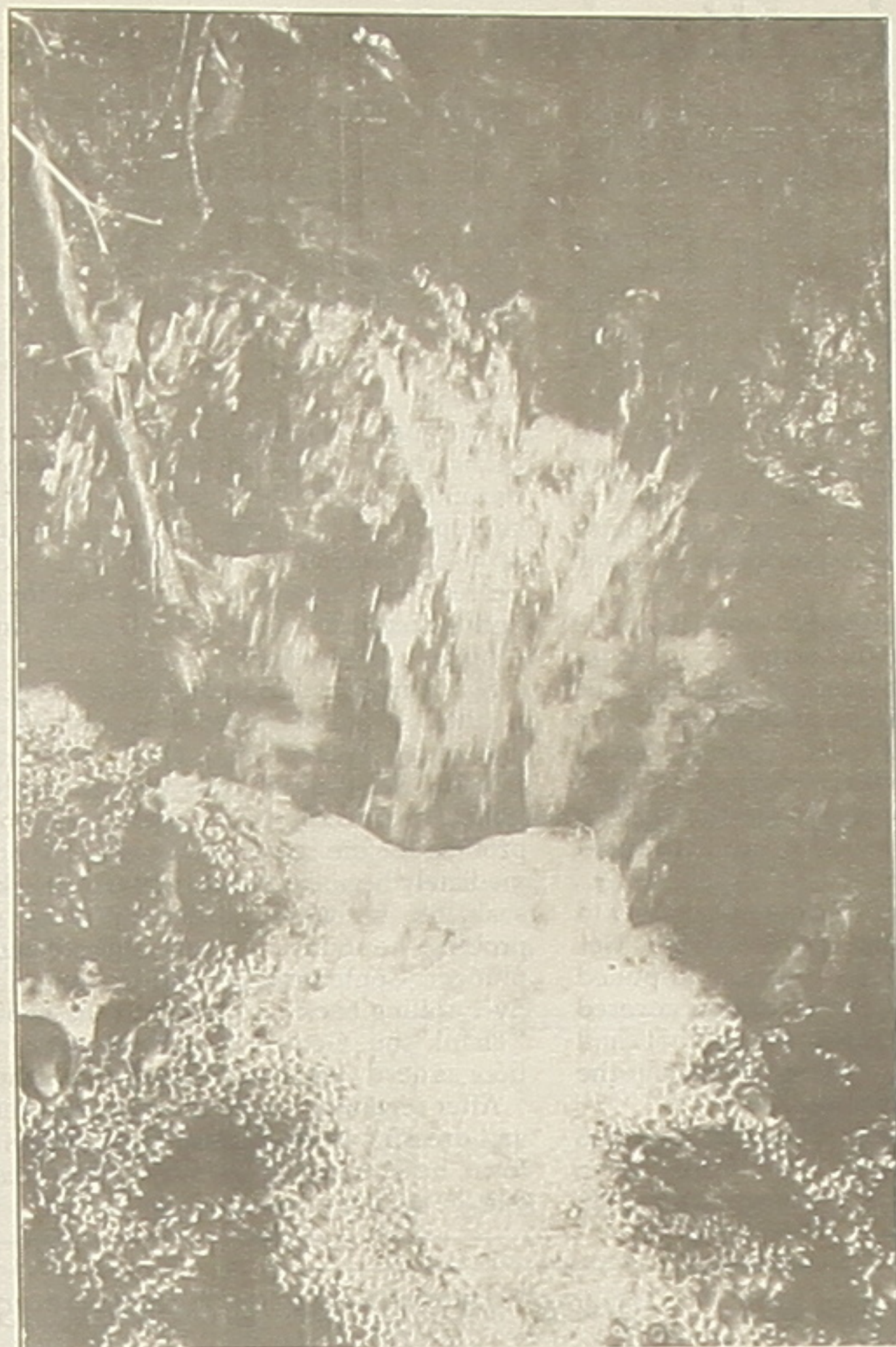


Nick Coble



Mark Ancell





Nick Coble



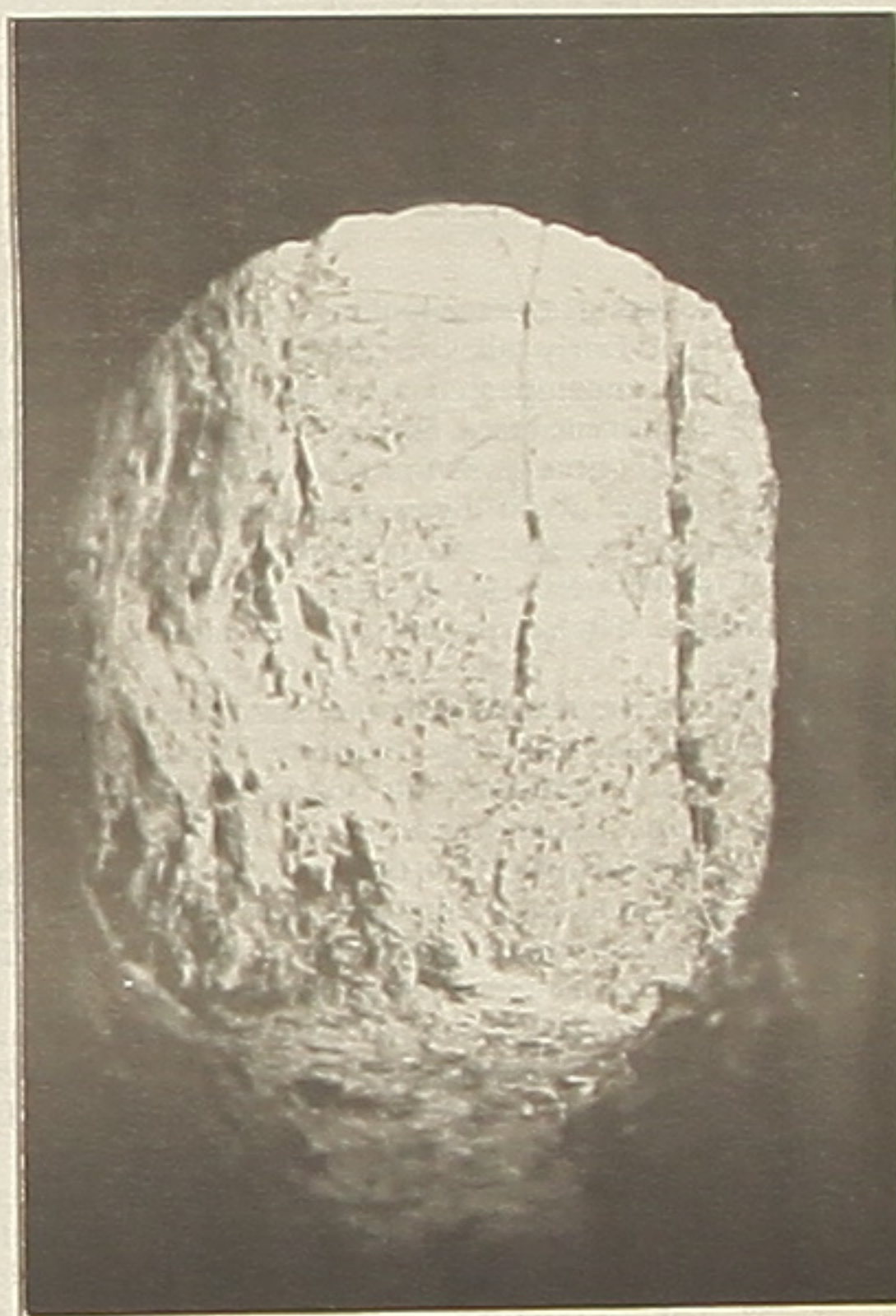
Nick Coble



Nick Coble

*"When taking photos, I dissect
a scene into smaller elements.
Then, I look for that perfect
angle."*

—Nick Coble



Nick Coble

How Sweet It Is: A Tribute

An Essay by Martha Vaught

I never was "Gung-Ho" about attending Missouri Southern. It was just a means to an end. After three semesters at Crowder, I felt truly pampered by the intimacy of a smaller college. Southern, to me, was just something to be tolerated as I pursued my degree in secondary education.

My first semester was uneventful. I discovered I had a flair for writing poetry in creative writing and have not written a poem since. But my second semester was a revelation. I chose newswriting as a communications elective and two (2) of my feature articles were printed in *The Chart*.

I didn't delude myself into thinking the reason was because of the quality of the stories. It was nearing Thanksgiving and production of *The Chart* was winding down and space in *The Chart* was needing to be filled. (The staff was desperate to fill empty columns.) [Editor's Note: This is author's opinion.]

I really got into the task at hand when the final assignments in newswriting were department stories. Still, my stories were well below average. In the early part of the semester, I stayed one afternoon to learn and to help on *The Chart*. That's when the copyediting bug really bit me. I became so excited! My true talent lay in proofreading and copyediting.

Then, because of my husband's illness, I dropped out for a semester. It was not absolutely necessary; I was just weary of the stress and uncertainty of the fall semester. And I was a little at loose ends about my major.

Well, the spring semester of 1988 was the longest of my college "career." I missed Southern with an intensity I had never before experienced. Had it not been for the fact that I have a part-time job in which I take a great deal of pride, I would have completely alienated my family.

Now, Southern Spring '89, here I come! I hope you are ready for me 'cause I can only exist without you. You are no longer just a means to an end; you are my passion. In December, '88, I will have achieved seniorhood, with 107 credit hours behind me. Awaiting me is my glorious, magnificent, fun-filled, Southern senior year (and a half). I'm majoring in Spanish and English education.

I go forth now to recognize my subjects.

The Big Illusion —Short Fiction by J.P. Haggard

The scene I am going to share with you has no time. It happened, is happening, and will happen for an eternity.

Picture, if you can, a white house with green shutters and a huge green yard. Within this house is a sometimes ordinary man. This house has a loving aroma of cookies baking, a fire burning, and the smell of "clean" in the air.

On any given day within this \$300,000 home lives a man with many secrets. This man stands in one of the bathrooms, which is covered with \$100 wall hangings, gold-plated fixtures, and a marble water basin, tub, and toilet.

As this thirty-five-year-old man stands in front of the mirror in this bathroom, he looks at an unfamiliar, sixty-year-old reflection. The reflection has dark circles underneath its eyes that lie upon a ghost-white complexion of death-like hue. He looks into its eyes and sees an empty, blank stare with a questioning look of "why." There are wrinkles forming around his red, swollen eyes.

At this same moment, he opens a drawer to his left with a shaking, veinless hand. Not looking, he searched the drawer and pulled out a black box. The black box was covered with designs of satanic-looking symbols and worn, chrome studs. The box was about the size of an electric shaving case.

Within this box was an illusion, or maybe even an escape for this enterprising young man. As he opens the box, he reveals a needle,

syringe, rubber strap, and a little vial of clear liquid.

The man gently picks up the vial with his left hand and caresses it, stating, "Here we are again my friend. I am at your mercy." With a devilish smile he picked up the needle and syringe with his right hand. Pushing the needle into the rubber seal on top of the clear vial, he sucked the fluid into the instrument of freedom.

The shakes started in, along with the fear of digging for a vein, as he wrapped the strap around his arm. No vein appeared. He thumped his forearm frantically, trying to arouse a blue streak to shoot, but none appeared. With frustration, he removed the strap and looked in the mirror at his neck, finding a bulging blue vein.

Squirting liquid from the end of the needle, he tilted his head, raised the rig to his neck, and with quivering hands stabbed the needle into his neck missing his vein. Angerly, he pulled the needle part way out and began probing for the center of the vein. Blood immediately began to stream down his neck and soak into his white, Jordache T-shirt. After probing, he found his mark and pushed the plunger. Contented, he smiled euphorically. Eyes rolling back into his head, he shouted, "Thank you, God!" He then dropped to the floor as dead weight and landed with a thump.

After regaining his composure, showering, and dressing in his Air-American pilot's uniform, he screamed, "Let's fly!" as he headed out the door for work.

Victim's Revenge —SHORT FICTION BY BETH STEVENSON

She was an average-looking, college student. Fairly tall, with long, black hair that encompassed a smooth, round, bespectacled face. She had big breasts and wore tight blue jeans that revealed bulgy legs and a thick waist. Even though she was obviously overweight, she had an air of innocence and honesty that caused one to notice her shining, black eyes and call her almost beautiful.

Cassandra Stevens had accomplished one of those marriages that lasts a lifetime. Though James and she were complete opposites, they moved as one. James was a man of immense integrity and people were drawn to and repelled from him simultaneously. He was tall and thin with streaks of gray in his black hair that gave him a distinguished air. But his large and russet-brown eyes gave him away as the kind and generous man that he was.

James worked at Derby's Liquor after school from 4 to 12 p.m. six nights a week. Left up to her own devices that Tuesday night on the eleventh day of November, Cassandra decided to walk to Waddills for a bag of barbecued Ruffles. The Stevens didn't live in the good part of town, so she was a little doubtful about walking there in the dark. It was around 7 p.m.

Still, she thought, when you're hungry, you're hungry.

As she walked out of the apartment house, she whistled to ward off evil spirits. She had to go through an alley between a bread store and a condemned house. Its pavement was uneven and the smell of bread suffocated all other smells, save the smell of decay from some dead animal lying close by. There were no lights in this alley to disrupt the smoldering blackness one had to wade through to get to the promising light of civilization at the other end. She always broke out in a cold sweat when she had to cross this barrier of blackness. She started to run.

She ran into something.

"Oh! Sorry. I didn't see you."

"Damn broad!" It was a man. He grabbed her wrists and swung her to the ground. She stumbled in the darkness trying to get up. He grabbed her again.

"Let go of me!"

A deep-throated laugh made her wince. Cassandra kicked him in the leg. That just made him madder. He hit the side of her head and knocked her off balance.

It was like a nightmare. She couldn't see, she couldn't fight his strength. She didn't have the time or the capability to think. She followed

her instincts.

"Hey, witch, you come along at the wrong time."

"Let go of me! Please..." her pleading faded into an empty wail as he slashed the front of her coat open. She felt his knife sinking into the fatty flesh of her stomach. The knife continued its path to her breasts; it had an identity all its own because she could not see or visualize her attacker, the force behind the knife. She was helpless; her strength was no match for the determination of this animal bent on destruction.

"I got ripped off, now you'll get ripped up." A hollow echoing filled her ears and she knew that this thing was a beast and not a man. She felt his grip loosen as she heard the noise, but another, more deadly than the first, erupted. A grunt, not animalistic, not humanistic, but primal. He gripped her neck like a vise as she heard words of stone dropping from those lips.

"Forty-seven bucks...Git-n-Go...Damn...You...You'll pay..."

She could feel the blood, warm and goey, coloring the pavement. Bright lights appeared, not in the sky as she thought, but inside her head from lack of oxygen. A strangled whisper

pleaded for death.

"If I live...you'll die."

...

"I'll kill you, you bastard!"

"She's comin' around, Doc."

"Nurse, a sedative. Quick!"

"No! No! Let me go!"

The sedative began to take effect and she sank back into that pitch-black alley of nightmares.

...

The next time Cassandra awoke, bright sunlight hurt her eyes and she knew she was safe. Her whole body itched, yet everywhere she tried to scratch she found bandages.

"Good morning, Cassandra. It's good to see you're awake. The doctor will be along in a minute. How do you feel?"

At least she didn't say, "How do we feel?"

"Well, let me tell ya, nurse, I'm mad as hell. I still can't believe this." *What's the use, she thought, this nurse is just doin' her job.* "When can I eat? I'm starvin'."

The nurse chuckled. "We'll have to wait for the doctor's 'okay' before you can eat. Would you like to have something to drink?"

"A cup of hot tea." Cassandra wasn't laughing. She was thinking. "Did they find that bastard?"

"Let's not think about that right now." The nurse stuck a thermometer in her mouth and left the room. Cassandra pulled it out and threw the damn thing at the closed door. She didn't want to know what her temperature was, she wanted to know if she was a victim with no revenge.

The door reopened, and she thought that it was probably the nurse again. Wrong. It was a stinkin' cop. He was a skinny punk with a crew cut and a red complexion. He didn't look to be sixteen years old. He turned Cassandra off.

"What the hell do you want?"

"Mrs. Stevens, my name is Sergeant Henkins. I would like to ask you a few questions."

"You've got to be kidding. I just became conscious a half an hour ago and you want to ask questions? Well, I'll tell ya. I have a question of my own: Did you catch that bastard?"

He turned even redder and examined the spit polish on his coal-black shoes. "No, not yet. That's why we need your help."

"Go to Hell! You should've gotten him for robbery by now if not for what he did to me. You aren't gettin' nothing from me."

"Now, Mrs. Stevens, we could get him with your help. You could describe him."

"I couldn't have seen him if I wanted to. Besides, you already have a description of him from the store. Now, get outta here."

The door burst open as the doctor came flying in. He was furious. "You can't come in here. She is in no state to answer your questions. Will you please leave!"

"But, doctor, we need her help," the sergeant replied.

"You don't need anybody's help," Cassandra

growled. "And I'll tell you something else, I'm gonna get that guy if you don't. You just remember that."

"You've upset my patient. Now get out!" The doctor pushed him out the door and took a deep breath before approaching his patient. He looked as though he had been harassed all his life. His back was permanently stooped. The skin on his tanned face was wrinkled and his hair was silver. Still, his eyes were alert and intelligent.

"Thanks, Doc. I was doin' fine, but thanks anyway. Now for more important matters, when can I eat?"

Apparently, the doctor thought that was a funny question. "I'd say you're feeling pretty good. Let's see how those cuts are healing first, okay?"

"Yeah, let's." When he went to touch her, she cringed, but then she realized that he was there to help undo the injustice.

What Cassandra found out that morning made her more determined than ever to avenge herself. There were over three-hundred stitches in her face, stomach and breasts. He had cut notches out of her breasts and made designs with his knife on her face and stomach. To top off her disgrace, he had raped her. She asked the doctor to be straight with her; and he told her that though the cuts

When he went to touch her, she cringed, but then she realized that he was there to help undo the injustice.

weren't deep enough to kill her, they were deep enough to permanently scar. She thought, *I will never be able to forget that night.*

She didn't cry for her severed breasts, she didn't cry for her scarred face, but she did cry for the damage done to her soul. The attacker hadn't taken her looks; Cassandra was used to being unattractive. He took her respect for men and this was something that she never again would be able to recapture. Never again would she be able to fully trust a man. She would always view a man as a weapon of superior strength, ready to wield that strength to batter her into shape. All she could feel was the need for revenge. Cassandra was going to make sure that creep paid with his life for what he did to her.

The doctor let her have some fruit and hot tea that first morning. James came in, as she was sipping the last of the tea, looking scared and sick to his stomach.

"Do I look that bad?" she asked.

His eyes said "yes," but he said, "You look a lot better than the first time I saw you. Don't worry. The wounds will heal."

That's what he thinks. She wasn't going to let him know how deep those wounds really were. She knew that she would never rest until she took revenge. "You're right, babe. The cuts will heal."

James hovered near the bed but never ap-

proached it or touched her. She was sure that she needed reassurance that someone else was angered by the indignation she had suffered. They were like two ill-fitting pieces that someone was trying to force together.

Cassandra pleaded inwardly for him to act normal. *Talk to me,* she thought. She was about to scream when finally he smiled, looking more like his old self.

"I do have some good news, Cassandra. Remember that citizen's emergency fund?" She never read the paper, so she just sat there. "Well, Springfield's City Council started this fund to pay for any hospital bills for a victim of a criminal act that the victim was not able to pay for. So we don't have to worry about the money."

"That is good news. It's about time victims stopped being treated like the criminal by having to foot the bill."

She noticed a bag on the floor beside the bed. "Hey, what's in that?"

"Oh, just something I picked up to help you pass time." He smiled as he handed her the sack.

"James, thanks. You're really a nice guy, huh?" It was a set of romance novels she had been wanting for a long time. She didn't think she'd get as much pleasure from them as she would have before.

James sorrowfully held her hand and Cassandra could feel him relaxing. Then he glanced at her face and shook his hand away from hers. He was embarrassed but tried to tell her he was hurting, too, by showing her what he had brought from home.

"I brought your robe and a few other things." He opened the drawer in the bedside table. There were pens and paper, for writing letters, Cassandra supposed. He had also brought her glasses, hair dryer and other necessities needed for an extended hospital stay. "Is there anything else you need, Cassandra?"

"I don't think so. Wait. Why don't you bring our wedding picture. That way I'll have you here even when you're not." She laughed. "I still don't make any sense. Do I?" In a way she still wanted things to be as they were and forget it ever happened.

"Sure you do. I'll bring the picture this afternoon. The doctor said that I should only stay about a half hour this morning."

"That doctor thinks I need a rest. Hell, man, I'm ready to get the hell out of here. Did he tell you how long before I can leave?"

"He said probably a couple of weeks, but—"

"No way. I have things to do. I'm not layin' here in bed for two weeks."

"Now, don't go gettin' excited, Cassandra. Nothin's as important as you gettin' better. So you do as the doctor tells you, you hear?"

"Okay, okay. But I don't want to miss too much school. By the way, did you go to school yesterday?"

"Don't worry about me. You've got yourself to worry about."

Cassandra hated to be babied, and the last thing she wanted was sympathy. But she guessed that James, and everyone else, however, was going to make sure that she was pampered back to health.

"All our parents are here in town. Dr. Swift said they could come this afternoon, if you're up to it."

"Sure. Might as well get it over with. Is that who those flowers are from?"

"Well, this one here is from me. Your parents' is next to the bathroom. By the TV is from my parents. Then, the roses are from your Spanish class." The first three bouquets were daisies, Cassandra's favorite flower.

The nurse stuck her head in. "I'm sorry, Mr. Stevens, you'll have to leave now and let our patient get some rest."

"Just what I need—rest. I'll see you this afternoon, James. Bring the whole gang. Oh, thanks again for the books."

He bent over to kiss her, but couldn't quite bring himself to. Looking her straight in the eye, nevertheless, he said, "I love you. See ya this afternoon, babe."

"I love you, too. Now scat. I need rest. Remember?" They both laughed, then she was left alone with Nurse Russell.

Nurse Russell was one of those big women who seemed too fat to do anything but sit. She was, however, a very graceful lady and was willing to provide a pleasant atmosphere for her patient. She had a pleasant, round face that held a flat nose and blue eyes, surrounded by tufts of straw-colored hair. Cassandra was tickled to find out her name was Russell. It fitted her perfectly for her girdle rustled like a bag of dry leaves when she walked.

...

Instead of two weeks, Cassandra was out of the hospital in eight days. November twenty-first. Just in time for Thanksgiving Day. The stitches were out, but she still appeared grotesque.

The doctor wanted to wait for the wounds to completely heal before starting on cosmetic surgery. The City Council's emergency fund didn't normally pay for that, but in her case, the Council had voted to pay the doctor to try and make Cassandra look like a person again.

She had lost the twenty pounds of fat, plus ten more. Her eyes were sunken and still a little black. Her skin had a yellow tint to it from breathing hospital air for so long. Her cheeks were criss-crossed with cuts that looked black compared to her sallow skin.

She really didn't care how she looked. There was only one thought in her mind: *revenge*. The police still hadn't found Gus Sticker, the maniac responsible for her face. Now, it was up to Cassandra.

Her first move was to have James buy a gun to protect her, of course. The police fell for it, but made one stipulation. They told her that they didn't want to catch her with it in her possession out of the house. She had lied when she told them that she wouldn't dream of car-

rying a gun around with her. They, however, didn't know that.

Her first night home, James cooked dinner and was very solicitous. She guessed he thought that she was keeping her feelings hidden, (She really was, she didn't want him to get involved with her plans.) since she hadn't broken down in a crying fit yet. Cassandra had overheard Dr. Swift tell him that she was probably still in a state of shock and there would come a time when she would be able to cry and tell him about it. Until then, she was to be treated with patient kindness.

It was a pretty quiet evening, and they went to bed early.

Then the first dream came—a dream that haunted her for two weeks straight. *She was in a pitch-black tunnel and could just make out a light at the end. She was running to reach the light when something made the hair on the back of her neck stand on end. She started sweating and running faster, but the footsteps were getting closer and closer until she thought she felt his breath on her neck. He grabbed her. She tried to scream, but no sound came. He laughed then—this sick, horrifying laugh.*

She sat up in bed, with sweat making the sheets cling to her body. Animal noises were coming from her throat. It took Cassandra awhile to realize that she was home in bed. When she did, she quietly went into the kitchen to make a soothing cup of tea, but not

She started sweating and running faster, but the footsteps were getting closer and closer until she thought she felt his breath on her neck.

before she checked the hall door to the apartment. The chain lock was still in place. She was careful not to let the whistle on the tea kettle blow.

Cassandra took her steaming cup of tea into the living room and sat down. She took a long cigarette from the pack on the table and settled back in a swirl of smoke. Eventually, she went back to bed, but not before the sky turned from black to gray around four in the morning.

When the alarm went off at eight, she felt refreshed. Cassandra turned to wake James up. (He never did hear the alarm.) But he wasn't there. She was a little panicky and started to get up to look for him when he came into the bedroom with a breakfast tray.

"Good morning, babe. Did you sleep all right?"

"Yes. But you kinda scared me. I didn't know where you were."

"I'm sorry. I just wanted you to get some rest. I heard you come back to bed last night." He was really asking, *Why did you get up?*

"Well, I was just kind of restless. Hell, that's all I did in the hospital—sleep. I guess I wasn't as tired as I thought." Cassandra didn't want him to know about the dream, it would probably scare him more than it did her.

Cassandra went to school that day to talk with her teachers about how she could make up her work. They were all rather shocked to see her, probably because she wasn't supposed to be out of the hospital yet and probably because of the way she looked. They offered condolences, then rushed through her assignments and took off to more important matters.

She didn't blame them. She wasn't very pretty to look at. In fact, she probably spoiled their day as well as their stomachs. But she could not help it. The doctor said for her not to wear any make-up for at least two weeks. So, she was stuck with coming face-to-face with revulsion everywhere she went.

Cassandra was glad that she didn't see any of her friends that day and escaped to her apartment for the Thanksgiving break. The rest of that week was uneventful. James even bought the groceries, a thing he hates to do, so she wouldn't have to go out.

...

Cassandra's face looked a little better when she was prepared to put her plan into action.

Every night that James went to work, she roamed the streets looking for her attacker. The third night, Cassandra was glad she had the gun with her. She was walking downtown, a grubby section of town, and two guys came up behind her, whistling and calling names. She paid no attention until they passed her and stood in front of her on the narrow sidewalk.

"Hey, chick, you look like you got some dough. How about handin' it over?"

Cassandra laughed as she felt the gun in her coat pocket. She slipped her finger through the trigger and brought the gun out.

"You still want my money?"

"Cause, if you do, you're going to get a bullet instead." They didn't hang around to see if she was serious or not. She laughed loudly at their retreating forms. She wondered why more people didn't carry guns. *It worked for me just perfectly.* The police, though, would have said, had they known, that she was lucky that those two punks didn't have guns, too.

...

After two weeks of street-walking, Cassandra knew she wasn't getting anywhere. She did see one guy, however, that looked like Sticker's mugshot, go into a rundown bar downtown.

As she opened the door to the Red Barn, the smoke and stench almost knocked her down. Cassandra waded over to the bar.

The bartender spotted her almost immediately. "Hey, girl, what the hell happened to you?"

Most everyone turned to stare then turned quickly back to their drinks. A low murmur broke out.

"Aw, nothin' much. I had a wreck and got a face full of glass."

"Hey, that's too bad."

"I was wondering," she said as she showed the bartender the picture she had of Sticker,

"if you have ever seen this guy in here before."

"Yeah. That's Sticker. Ain't it?"

She nodded.

He went on to say, "What ya want him for? He ain't no good."

"Yeah, I know. I'm his old lady from Eldorado. He ripped off my car and my stash. Ya know where I can find him?"

"Well, I was wonderin' why he was holin' up with Marty. Marty's one of the downtown crowd. She's one of the best, though. She has a place up above an old hardware store. I'm not sure where exactly, though. But if I see Sticker, I'll tell 'em you're looking for him."

Cassandra laughed. "Hey, don't go doin' me no favors. You tell him I'm around, and he'll just go somewhere else." She slipped the chubby bartender a twenty-dollar bill. "You just let on you never seen me, if I come in here with him one night. Okay?"

"Sure thing, honey. He deserves to get caught by somebody. It might as well be you. Good luck!"

Cassandra was elated as she entered the fresh air outdoors. She was close now, real close. She wasn't sure she could trust that bartender, since he was a man, so she knew she'd have to close in fast. The only problem

was that it was about midnight and time for Cinderella to go home before her charming prince found out what was going on.

As she walked up the steps to her apartment house, Cassandra noticed a light was on in the apartment. *Uh, oh!* She had to think up something really fast. James must have heard her coming down the hall, because he had the door open when she was only three feet away. He startled her.

"Where the hell have you been? You want the same thing to happen all over again?"

Boy, was he mad. She nonchalantly walked past him and got one of his smokes and lit it. She blew the smoke in his direction to give herself something to hide behind. Cassandra felt like laughing, and it was hard to keep a smile from her face.

"There's no need to be worried, James, I took the gun with me. I—"

"You what?"

"Well, I was restless and decided to take a walk. I took the gun along for protection. It's no big deal, really."

"That does it. You can't sleep, you hardly ever eat anything, you never study anymore, and now you're takin' midnight walks. Well, no more. I'm going to take the next two weeks off so I can keep an eye on you. Then, when school's out, I'm taking you to my parents so I can go back to work without having to worry about you."

Cassandra didn't think he'd go this far. She'd never be able to catch Sticker if she didn't convince him that she could stay home like a good, little, scared rabbit.

"Aw, come on, James. You know we can't afford for you to take off work. I promise that I'll never go out while you're working, again."

His face still held that closed, hard look that he had when nothing could change his mind.

"Really, James. What do I have to do to convince you. It was a dumb idea, and I'm sorry. There's no reason to get uptight about it."

He turned his back to her while he filled his pipe and lit it. When he turned back to face Cassandra, he looked old—much older than his twenty-seven years.

"Cassandra, I know I may be acting unreasonably, but I'm not going back to work until school is out. We'll wait and see if you go to my parents or not." He saw the disbelief in her face and dispelled any chance she had to talk him out of it. "I don't want to hear your promises or reasons. I'm not goin' to work and that's final. Now go to bed."

Cassandra meekly did as he said, but she knew that he couldn't watch her every minute. As soon as she got the chance, she would sneak out and fulfill her revenge.

...

He fell back, and she scrambled to get his knife. She heard screams and realized one of them had been her own.

She couldn't have been more wrong. If James wasn't with her, his best friend was. For a solid week, Cassandra was like a caged animal. She reacted with sullenness and silence except for an outburst of desperate rage once or twice. She thought that she'd never catch that creep now. Being treated like a criminal just made her all the more determined to catch him.

Finally, school came to a close. Cassandra knew James was still considering sending her to his parents, so she took the only course of action she could. James and Cassandra hadn't made love since she had gone into the hospital. She figured that if he wasn't so frustrated from being horny all the time, he'd probably let her stay in Springfield.

They were sitting on the couch and Cassandra tentatively reached over and touched his leg. He looked at her with surprise but didn't say anything. She leaned over and kissed him. She tried very hard to feel something but couldn't.

As they were walking into the bedroom, he asked, "Are you sure you're ready?"

She felt choked and couldn't answer, so she nodded her head in assent.

She hated every minute of it, because she felt like she was being used for some reason, but it worked.

Cassandra could now go back to her search. Every night Cassandra waited outside the Red Barn. She knew that Sticker probably felt safe there, unless that bartender had squealed on her. The fourth night of her vigil, she was about ready to leave because it was freezing. It was about ten degrees and snowing for a white Christmas. Then he was there. All of a sudden, he and his hooker, Marty, were five

feet from the door. She could hardly believe it and barely reacted in time.

Cassandra walked in his direction very casually and stuck the gun in his ribs.

"Hey, Sticker, how ya been?" She didn't think he recognized her voice, and as she was standing with her back to the light, a shadow hid her face. He probably didn't know what she looked like, anyway. Cassandra knew he'd probably recognize his handiwork, if he looked close enough. "Hey, Marty. Why don't you just go in and wait for your lover boy? I won't keep him too long." She did as Cassandra asked, because she was cold, probably, more than anything else.

"Listen. I don't know who the hell you are, but you'd better just go on an' leave me alone. I don't like to be messed with."

Cassandra laughed. *Same old Sticker.* She told him in a hard, dry voice to back around to the alley. He did it.

"Okay, Sticker, give me your wallet."

He handed it to her.

"Wow. Looks like a lotta bucks. You musta made a good hit lately."

He didn't say anything. He just stood there. She could see his face in the darkness by the light reflecting on the sweat breaking out on it.

"You mean to tell me you haven't figured out who I am, yet? If you remember right, I told you I'd get you. You're gonna suffer just like I did."

Before Cassandra knew what was happening, she saw a gleam of steel headed at her face. She raised her arm and pulled the trigger at the same time. He fell back, and she scrambled to get his knife. She heard screams and realized one of them had been her own.

"You're not going to get me again, Sticker." Cassandra hungrily watched the fear mount in his eyes as she brought the knife down on his genitals.

He screamed in agony. She managed to stab both his eyes and slit his throat before they dragged her off of him.

Cassandra just stood there with the knife in her hand as the cops and the ambulance arrived. There was blood everywhere. Blood was still bubbling out of his neck and mixing with the snow.

Some one grabbed her arm and tried to guide her away.

"He won't never get me again. He tried. He won't get me no more. He..." The thought just kept going through her mind and she didn't know what she had said to them out loud until the attendant said, "No, he won't get you no more."

Cassandra heard somebody scream, "Killer! Murderer!" and figured it was probably his friend, Marty.

They put Cassandra in the ambulance. Tears were streaming down her cheeks. Still, if anyone had looked through the window, they would have seen the smile of satisfaction on her face. She, the victim, had gotten her revenge. □

Without financial assistance, *Avalon* will cease publication.

Never ones to face the fact that we're spending too much money and suddenly faced with the fact that there is no more money, the staff members of this publication are sorry to announce that this is the last issue of *Avalon*. However, if enough funding comes in from individual donors, this "death" of *Avalon* will only be temporary.

Each issue of *Avalon* costs from \$220 to \$270, and since this magazine first began publication, its funds have been taken out of *The Chart's* budget. Unfortunately, as *The Chart's* budget has not increased and *Chart* expenses have increased, *Avalon* is to be eliminated from the budget.

In the past two or three months, advertisements in *The Chart* have told of the likely elimination of *Avalon*. In the last issue of this magazine (Dec. 13, 1988), a note on page 2 read, "*Avalon* accepts monetary contributions." This was a hint. Perhaps the note should have read, "*Avalon* needs monetary contributions."

Those who enjoy reading *Avalon* and those who enjoy seeing their work printed here understand that the editor of this publication does not want *Avalon* to cease publication.

So, if you're interested in contributing money to this non-profit magazine (whose staff is not paid at all), call 417-625-9311 or come by Room 117 of Hearn's Hall and express this interest. Or if you want to write us, our address is:

Avalon
clo *The Chart*
Missouri Southern State College
Joplin, Mo. 64801-1595